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DEPARTMENT OF NURSING EDUCATION

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CONFERENCES WITH HEAD NURSES¹

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IN introducing the subject, Conferences with Head Nurses, for round table discussion, I would like to emphasize the word "conference"—to consult—to exchange ideas.

The first position offered to a young graduate in a hospital is that of head nurse in charge of a ward or floor. The position usually is accepted with enthusiasm and frequently with confidence in her own ability. Looking on with the recent student nurse's point of view, the position of head nurse is one which emancipates, which sets free the hard-worked and imposed-upon senior from her bondage and gives her a position in which there is no work to do. Often from the student's point of view, the head nurse has little or nothing to do and it is quite easy to walk around, dressed in white, to look on and find fault. Usually this is what she tries to do at first,—simply give orders, make changes, walk around and look on, and as a result troubles soon begin to accumulate. The obvious reason is that, as a student nurse, she has had the viewpoint of the student only,—the viewpoint of getting for herself and of keeping in mind only one specific thing. As a head nurse, she soon finds out that she must have not only a participating interest but a controlling and working interest also. It is not only what she can get out of her work, but what she can personally contribute and bring to it. It is not only a matter of keeping the every-day work going but of building it up and preparing for tomorrow, and with this revelation disappointment comes as she realizes her inadequacy.

I am always glad to see to some extent at least this new attitude, for it is not till that first flush of perfect satisfaction with herself has faded that much impression can be made or that advice will be welcomed from persons of greater experience.

Often the young head nurse after the first few weeks in charge of her ward will say: "I am so discouraged. I do not seem to find anything as I thought it would be." At this period, it is well to begin

¹ Read at the annual meeting of the Alumnae Association, Department of Nursing and Health, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York.

a series of conferences. In the first week or two, the young head nurse has visions of a reconstruction. She has opinions on and solutions for everything. She would wish to change all routines and often-times banish discipline and order, but as she has to meet each day some new problem, such as sickness among the nurses, which means an inadequate staff, and emergencies of all kinds, she has a new reaction and finds that being a head nurse means work and that an immaculate white dress and unsoiled hands are not always compatible with success. I have found it a good plan, at the first of the school year when new appointments are made, to give only the absolutely necessary instructions and help to the new head nurses and to watch them carefully, listen to what they have to say, guard against any mistake which might occur as a result of their inexperience and ignorance, but to a more or less degree give them an opportunity to stretch their wings and feel that sense of freedom longed for by every nurse after three years of training. During the course of training, instruction is given in a more or less formal way, but at this period a new method is desirable and instruction in the form of conferences is most satisfactory.

To gain the young head nurses' confidence is the first step, and I have found it of inestimable value to begin an informal but organized series of conferences in my own sitting room with a cup of tea to break down the barrier that unhappily seems to exist between the students and the faculty. I usually tell them at this first meeting why I think it is well for us to get together. I explain many of the things that previously they could not understand. I try to tell them what responsible positions they hold and how much we depend upon them, that really the head nurse on a ward is the most important officer in the school and that the care of the patients in her ward, the training of the nurses, and the reputation of the hospital, depend more on what she as a single individual contributes than on that which anyone else contributes.

Usually on the first day there is not much exchange of ideas, but they always listen and learn. The reaction to this first lesson is always good and it is usually difficult the following morning to get round the hospital on schedule time, as each one is anxious and impatient to talk about herself and her ward.

At this period, the supervisors have their greatest opportunity, and if they are tactful and wide-awake, they will get cooperation and be able to guide the new head nurses in an entirely new way.

I have found it wise not to include the supervisors at the regular weekly conferences with the head nurses. It is much easier to gain the confidence of the younger group alone. At the same time, the super-

visors and instructors should be kept in touch with the problems the young head nurses have to meet that they may the more intelligently give advice and help and thus prevent conflict and confusion. To bring this about, I have found it advantageous to hold frequent personal conferences with the individual supervisors and discuss the particular problems and the method of dealing with them from all points of view in their specific departments, translating and interpreting the reaction which I have gained through my personal contact with the head nurses, and their reaction through personal supervision.

A good deal of time is taken up in this way, but I do not believe the same result can be obtained in any other way, and the mutual understanding which grows and develops is well worth the time and energy spent.

I do not feel that any method which has not been practically tried out is of particular value; therefore, I am simply describing the method which I practice and am attaching to this preliminary discussion some outlines and some material which I use.

The conferences are arranged to suit a local situation and the outlines accompanying are entirely the same and have not been adapted for use in other institutions. Still, they may be suggestive, and while the subject matter is written for one school, some of it may serve as a basis for others.

The outline for the regular conference is as follows:

Conferences with Junior Head Nurses, once each week, 4-5 p. m.

- I. Why did I choose nursing as a profession? Discussion.
What is there in it for my own development?
What can I put into it to make it the better for my being a member of it?
Why have I chosen to do institutional work? Discussion.
The ward as a unit.
The ward as an integral part of the whole.
My responsibility as head nurse in that ward. Discussion.
- II. The student nurse. What does the term mean?
My responsibility to her and what she has a right to expect from me.
The marking and grading of student nurses. Discussion.
- III. How can I become a teacher?
Methods of teaching practical work in general.
Supervision and its relation to teaching.
Why are the executive ward duties allowed to prevent the head nurse from becoming an efficient teacher?
What is my most important responsibility as a head nurse? Discussion.
- IV. How to plan a day's work? Posting of hours.
What should I expect from those for whom I am planning?
How can I obtain good work from student nurses?
How should I correct mistakes?
What value should I place upon mistakes?
Discuss mistakes and errors which occur in hospitals and compare them with mistakes made in other institutions or in other lines of work.

Should we develop initiative in pupil nurses?

Discuss reasons pro and con.

Why are routines necessary?

How can I teach the importance of these things?

V. Methods of ward inspection.

Methods of exchange.

Methods of caring for hospital property.

Ward standards and equipment. Discussion.

VI. General discussion on: Personal problems connected with ward administration; orderlies, maids, nurse helpers; the commissary department; store-rooms, etc.

How can coöperation be secured?

Other conferences follow every other week at the same hour on difficulties presented by the head nurses themselves in their experiences. The exact form which these conferences will take is determined by the need of meeting the nursing situations.

Associated with these conferences will be demonstrations by the practical nursing instructor on how the student nurse is being taught in the classroom. The object is to insure a uniform method of teaching and to prevent conflict in the mind of the young student nurse. Not very much of this has been done yet, except in the regular monthly demonstrations.

The following slip is given to head nurses when the conference, How to Plan a Day's Work, is discussed:

SUGGESTIONS FOR HOURS FOR SENIOR STUDENT NURSES
ON WARD DUTY

7-9 a. m. 7-11 a. m. 7-12 a. m. 7-11 a. m. 1- 5 p. m.

1-7 p. m. 3- 7 p. m. 1- 4 p. m. 7-11 p. m. 7-11 p. m.

Each group of hours brings varying experience. We owe it to the Senior student nurse to give her every experience and not use her simply for what is convenient or expedient for the ward to relieve the head nurse of routine duties.

The first group: (7-9) (1-7) will probably relieve the head nurse most frequently of responsibility, but it deprives the Senior nurse of:

1. Conferences with the Head Nurse.
2. An opportunity to attend medical rounds.
3. An opportunity to study, under supervision, ward administration.
4. An opportunity to obtain real knowledge of the sick patients.
5. An opportunity to attend classes without the rush and stress of heavy afternoon responsibility.

The second group: (7-11) (3-7) and the third group (7-12) (1-4) afford:

1. An opportunity for conferences with head nurses and to study ward administration under supervision.
2. An opportunity for attending medical rounds.
3. An opportunity to study and understand the care and progress concerned with the nursing of the sick patients.

The fourth group: (7-11) (7-11) :

1. Affords all the advantages of morning hours on the ward.
2. Relieves the Senior nurse of many routine duties.
3. Gives her the real nursing responsibility of night duty during the most active hours with an opportunity of using initiative and judgment.
4. Gives her longer consecutive hours off duty for study and recreation.

The fifth group: (1-5) (7-11) :

1. Desirable hours for a nurse who has had all the foregoing experiences and is desirous of obtaining some initiative in her work.
2. Affords a long morning off duty with an entire freedom from daily routine.

It is apparent that each grouping of hours has varying advantages and disadvantages, and the head nurse whose desire it is to assist in the education of the student nurses under her will without hesitation study not only the needs of the ward, her own personal comfort and ease in management, but rather how things can be adjusted to give the broadest and fullest experience afforded on her ward to the student nurse for whose education in no small measure she is responsible. It is, therefore, apparent that the head nurse who continuously posts her Senior nurse on duty without variation of hours does so because it is the easiest and most comfortable thing for herself and she is not giving a serious consideration to what will provide the most complete and comprehensive experience for the student. She should vary her own hours on duty, if necessary, to afford every opportunity available.

What is true in arranging the Senior students' hours on duty is true also in arranging the hours of the Intermediate and Junior students. No student nurse should be kept for weeks on continuous hours or duties because she has learned to do certain clerical or routine things skillfully and well; for example, the giving of medicines, charting, the taking of temperatures, etc. Yet this is done continuously because, for the head nurse, it is the line of least resistance and for the student nurse, who may not realize in the fullest measure the need for a change, a pride in continuing in the thing she knows how to do well and a reluctance to undertake new tasks.

In planning the hours of the Junior student, it is frequently observed that little real thought beyond the need of the ward is given to either her duties or their supervision. She it is who is often put on 7-11 evening duty. These hours, it seems, are often the most responsible of the day. Fewer supervisors are on duty, the head nurse is rarely available, and usually the medical staff is depleted during these hours. Here it is that the Junior nurse is left to decide things for herself before her experience will warrant good judgment. During these early evening hours, the opportunity is afforded for most expert nursing and the comfort of the patient for the entire night is dependent largely on what is done or left undone at this time.

The Junior nurse should be given these hours only as an assistant and never as the nurse in charge, as is frequently arranged. This student needs all the supervision and teaching that can be given her and should be on duty as far as possible when the head nurse is on duty also; but observation proves that head nurses, when left to themselves to post hours, frequently see that the most expert service is available when they themselves are on duty without consideration as to whether or not it is to the advantage of the student nurses.

When changes are made in the personnel of any ward, it is poor judgment to post any nurse, Senior or otherwise, on duty, on hours when she will have entire responsibility of the ward in the care of the patients or in the administration. She does not know the patients, and a nurse is always at a disadvantage under such circumstances. It is never fair to a nurse to keep her on duty for two hours in the morning during the busiest period and send her off to return for the entire afternoon with responsibility of the ward, having had no conference with her concerning it. It is for such reasons mistakes occur and errors of judgment are made which are altogether unnecessary if forethought had been used in planning. The head nurse's responsibility is not to administer in the easiest, but in the best way, even if it be at inconvenience to herself. She must always remember that she is the person employed by the hospital to hold the responsibility and that the nurses under her are students to whom we owe a nursing education and that as a salaried person employed for a specific purpose it is her responsibility to adjust herself to the needs of the ward rather than to adjust the Student nurses to her needs and the needs of the ward, therefore making their education a secondary consideration. The arranging of nurses' hours for duty on the wards of the hospital is a matter which requires the greatest amount of thought and consideration.

(The discussion of conferences will be continued in the July issue)

SUMMER COURSES, INSTITUTES, AND CONFERENCES

California: STANFORD UNIVERSITY, June 20-July 26. (See *May Journal*, page 632.)

Massachusetts: Boston.—HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL offers a course in Physical Therapeutics, July 5 to August 15. This course is designed to furnish advanced instruction in the various branches of Physiotherapy Massage, Therapeutic Exercise, Electrotherapy, and Hydrotherapy. Students making application for the course must have previous fundamental training and practical knowledge in either Nursing, Physiotherapy, or Physical Education. Instruction will consist of lectures and clinical observation at the Boston City, Massachusetts General, and Peter Bent Brigham Hospitals. Course limited to thirty students. For rates and detailed information, apply to Graduate Office, Harvard Medical School. **Cambridge.**—THE MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY offers summer courses in Public Health and Health Education, July 10 to August 11. 1. Methods of Teaching Hygiene and Public Health in the Public Schools. 2 Personal Hygiene and Nutrition. 3. Sanitary Science and Public Health. 4. Elementary Bacteriology. 5. Bacteriology. 6. Public Health Laboratory Methods. Apply Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass.

Michigan: Ann Arbor.—THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN will offer a four months' course in Public Health Nursing, June 23-October 20. The course will be given under the direction of Mrs. Barbara H. Bartlett. Courses will be offered in Psychology, Sociology, Public Speaking, Hygiene and Sanitation, as well as Principles of Public Health Nursing. The field work will be given in Detroit at the Delray Health Center in coöperation with the Department of Health and Visiting Nurse Association, and will also include two well organized counties. Registration days are June 23 and 24, in Room 329, Science Building, University of Michigan. Monday, June 26 classes begin. August 18 the theory ends at the University. By October 20 theory and practice are completed.

New York: Albany.—THE HUDSON VALLEY LEAGUE OF NURSING EDUCATION has arranged an institute, June 5-10. Talks on the Principles of Education will be given by some one from the field of general education. These will be followed by the application of the principles to the education of the nurse. Classes will be taught and ample opportunity will be afforded for discussion. Following is the programme which has been arranged: June 5, Principles of Education, Principles of Teaching Applied to Teaching of Nursing. June 6, Organization of Schools of Nursing, Principles of Education, Teaching Pupils How to Study, Teaching of Class in Nursing. June 7, Discussion of Teaching of Class in Nursing, Principles of Education, continued, Principles of Teaching Applied to the Teaching of Sciences, Teaching of Class in Anatomy and Physiology. June 8, Supervision, Principles of Education, continued, Standardization of Equipment, followed and illustrated by trip through hospital. June 9, Formation of Classes,—Class Schedules—Records, Supervision of Home Life and Social Activities, Teaching of class in solutions followed by discussion. June 10, Need and Use of Reference Library. **New York City.**—THE DEPARTMENT OF NURSING AND HEALTH, TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY is planning a special conference on School Nursing during the fourth week of the Summer Session, July 31-August 4, inclusive. Dr. Josephine Baker of the Bureau of Child Hygiene, New York City Department of Health, Dr. David Snedden, Professor of Educational Sociology, Dr. William H. Kilpatrick, Professor of Education; Mabel Carney, Professor of Rural Education, and Dr. Jesse Williams, Professor of Physical

Education at Teachers College, and other members of the faculty, representatives from the New York State Department of Education, and other experts in School Health work will assist in the programme. One hour daily will be spent in considering the school nurse's share in Health Education; another hour in the health supervision of the school child, outlining the most effective programme, considering results of past experiments; and a third hour in the routines of School Nursing work. Round table conferences will be arranged as needed. In addition to the regular students attending the summer session, a limited number of School Nurses within easy radius of New York City are invited to attend, and those securing admission cards from the Department will be admitted to all sessions of the conference. Further information may be obtained by writing to the Department of Nursing and Health, Teachers College, New York. **Woodstock (Ulster County).**—THE BYRDCLIFFE SUMMER SCHOOL OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY will be continued this summer by master craftsmen resident in Woodstock, under the direction of Bertha Thompson, who for the past three years has been a director of Occupational Therapy in Army and Public Health hospitals. The courses offered this summer have been planned especially to meet the needs of graduate occupational aides who feel that they want further technical training in one or more of the crafts. Instruction will be offered in the following: Leather Work, Weaving, Basketry, Woodcarving, Modelling, Pottery, Metal Work, Jewelry, Woodwork, Toy-making. Full information about the school may be obtained from Bertha Thompson, Woodstock, Ulster County, N. Y. Application should be made early, as the size of the classes will be limited. The school will open on July 6.

Ohio: Cincinnati.—AN INSTITUTE FOR PRINCIPALS AND INSTRUCTORS OF SCHOOLS OF NURSING will be given June 13-17, under the direction of the Ohio State League of Nursing Education. (See *May Journal*, page 651.)

Washington: Seattle.—THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON is offering a course in Training School Administration, June 21-July 26. (See *May Journal*, page 636.)

WHO'S WHO IN THE NURSING WORLD

XI. AMY MAY HILLIARD

BIRTHPLACE: Ossining, N. Y. **PARENTAGE:** American. **PRELIMINARY EDUCATION:** Public and private schools. **PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION:** St. Luke's Hospital Training School for Nurses, New York City. **POSITIONS HELD:** Supervisor of Operating Rooms and Clinics of Rush Medical College and Presbyterian Hospital, Chicago, Illinois; Directress of Nurses, Evanston Hospital, Evanston, Illinois; Assistant Superintendent of the School of Nursing, Grace Hospital, Detroit, Michigan; Superintendent of Nurses, Jackson Sanitarium, Dansville, New York; Superintendent of Nurses and Superintendent of the Hospital, New York Neurological Institute, New York City; Inspector of Nurse Training Schools, New York State Education Department, Albany, N. Y.; General Superintendent of Training Schools, Bellevue and Allied Hospitals, New York City; Superintendent of Samaritan Hospital, Troy, New York. **AUTHOR OF:** Many papers for meetings and articles for professional periodicals. **MEMBER OF:** The Board of Directors of the National League for Nursing Education, The National Committee on Red Cross Nursing Service, Washington, D. C.; The Nurse Training School Council, Education Department, Albany, New York. **OFFICES HELD:** President and Secretary of New York State League for Nursing Education; President, New York City League for Nursing Education; Chairman, Manhattan Local Committee Red Cross Nursing Service; Chairman, Mayor's Committee on Nursing, Council of National Defense, New York City; President, St. Luke's Alumnae Association, New York City; member of Board of Directors of New York State Nurses' Association.